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SEP 13 2002

The Honorable William M. Thomas
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-6348

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed is a matrix that includes the Administration's positions regarding a number of miscellaneous tariff bills on which the Committee has requested comment. We have already discussed these views with the staff of the Subcommittee on Trade. With the concurrence of Subcommittee staff, we are providing the Administration's position and brief explanatory comments in two columns added to the end of a matrix produced by the International Trade Commission. Where the Administration opposes a bill, the basis of the Administration's objection is noted.

An Administration position of "no objection if the suspension period is amended" means that the Administration does not oppose the bill provided that the term of the temporary tariff reduction does not extend beyond December 31, 2004. We oppose any longer suspension period at a time when the United States is engaged in multilateral trade negotiations that provide opportunities to gain concessions from other countries and export opportunities for U.S. manufacturers. Longer suspension periods would reduce U.S. trade negotiators' bargaining leverage in negotiations to gain reciprocity for U.S. duty changes.

The Administration generally opposes provisions that would retroactively apply a duty suspension, unless the bill is a simple extension or renewal of a previously enacted duty change. In cases where retroactive treatment is proposed, the U.S. Customs Service recommends that the legislation includes language that is similar to that found in Section 483 of the Customs and Trade Act of 1990 (Pub. L. No. 101-382). That provision authorized reliquidation of entries, provided that (1) importers of goods receiving the benefit apply for reliquidation within 180 days after enactment, and (2) importers present sufficient information to the Customs Service to allow it either to locate the entry or to reconstruct the entry if it cannot be located.

We further recommend that the Committee consult with the U.S. International Trade Commission to obtain the appropriate Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States item numbers for all proposed tariff items.